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251634Z Feb 06

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000288

SIPDIS

STATE PASS DOE FOR DAS JBRODMAN AND CGAY
TREASURY FOR ASEVERENS AND SRENENDER
COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS
STATE PASS TRANSPORTATION FOR MARAD
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ
STATE FOR DS/IP/AF, AF/EX, DS/IP/OPO, DS/ICI/PII, DS/DSS/ITA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/23/2016

TAGS: [EPET](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [KHLS](#) [PINR](#) [ETRD](#) [CASC](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: HOSTAGE-TAKING, SITREP #9

REF: LAGOS 287 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Acting Pol/Econ Chief Shannon Ross for Reasons 1.4 (D & E)

Hostage Welfare Update

[11.](#) (C) The hostage-takers allowed a journalist to see AmCit hostage Macon Hawkins at an undisclosed location away from the other eight hostages. Hawkins told the journalist the hostages were doing well and eating; Hawkins' statements suggest he has resumed eating and drinking. He confirmed he had received medicine for his diabetes and hypertension. During his interview, Hawkins spoke about development and the plight of Delta Ijaws, as did the January hostages. (Comment: Hawkins's interaction with the journalist was likely fully scripted. End Comment.) The journalist, whom Shell considers a trusted source, said the captors were divided into two groups: one well-armed and disciplined, composed of hardened militia members from Delta, Rivers, and Bayelsa states, directly responsible for guarding the hostages. The second group consists of youths from the Nkerekoko area associated with Government Ekpemupolo, and is less well trained, armed, and battle-hardened. (Note. For further information on the presumed location of the hostages, the whereabouts and demands of Government Ekpemupolo, and the hostage-takers' methods, see TD-314/13769-06. End Note.)

[12.](#) (C) Willbros senior management has traveled to Delta State to meet Governor Ibori. Willbros management states Ibori has accused them of carrying on their own negotiations with the hostage-takers. (Comment. Ibori's accusation is false; Shell and Willbros assess Ibori is likely blaming Willbros for slowing his negotiations, allowing him to "save face" and explain away his inability to so far deliver the hostages. End Comment.) Willbros management also brought personalized letters of support from the company to the hostages, which will be delivered via Governor Ibori's committee. Meanwhile, Willbros is working to obtain letters of support from all of the families for later delivery.

Negotiations Update

[13.](#) (C) In a conversation with the Consul General, Timi Alaibe, the Managing Director of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), revealed he is in contact with the hostage-takers. He said they had four demands: 1) a letter from President Obasanjo guaranteeing no military reprisals; 2) the release of militant leader Dokubo Asari; 3) a formal promise of specific development programs; and 4) jobs providing security to the oil companies, in place of the military, who would be removed from the creeks. Several sources also reported negotiations are stalled on where and to whom the hostages would be released.

Energy Update: Shell Facilities Still Closed

[14.](#) (C) There is no change in the status of damaged or closed Shell facilities, and production remains reduced approximately 550,000 bpd. Assessing the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta's (MEND) efforts to damage Shell, Shell reports MEND has a clear understanding of both the company's operations and the value of various physical assets. MEND strikes with accurate knowledge of where and how to inflict serious damage on Shell's operations and export capabilities; Shell does not consider MEND's choice of targets as targets of opportunity. While MEND does not appear to have the capability to move Delta-wide, Shell confirms MEND consistently selects high-value targets within its general operational area.

15. (C) Power generation remains down by approximately 850 MW (of a total of 3200 MW nationwide) due to a damaged gas feeder line, which cannot be repaired until the security situation improves. The Nigerian Gas Company (NGC) reports they are unable to make a damage assessment of the affected pipeline, and do not expect to be able to repair it anytime soon.

Media Update

16. (SBU) Leading dailies carried photos of the hostages, prominently featuring AMCIT Macon Hawkins. Press widely quoted a MEND statement released with the photos, including MEND claims it is not negotiating with the GON, but rather "this is a sick lie by politicians." The statement also included threats to attack more oil installations without warning, and demands to involve a third party in the negotiations, such as the U.N., USG, or HMG. Press reported statements by Governor Ibori that the hostage-takers' only demand is full assurances from the GON they will not be attacked after the release of the hostages. Finally, a leading daily headlined with "A Week of Crises," citing fears in the creeks, sectarian riots and deaths, and continued unrest regarding a proposed third term for President Obasanjo.

17. (SBU) Press widely reported the Federal High Court in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, yesterday upheld a 2004 National Assembly resolution ordering Shell to pay 1.5 billion USD in environmental compensation to the Ijaw of Bayelsa State. Shell has stated it is appealing, and is open to dialogue with communities. (Note: This court judgment could harden MEND's negotiating stance on demands for Shell to pay compensation for environmental damages. End note.) The paramount ruler of Yenagoa Local Government Area, Chief Sasime, publicly told Shell it should pay the judgment as a mark of respect for the Nigerian judiciary, even if it then moves forward with an appeal. A militia spokesman, Joseph Evah, reportedly said a Shell compensation payment would play a key role in the release of the hostages. Press also reported Evah's claim that the hostages are on trial before the Egbusu gods of Ijawland.

Consular Update

18. (C) All Consular staff are accounted for. There have been no reports of additional attacks on AmCits.
BROWNE